



No. 28
APRIL

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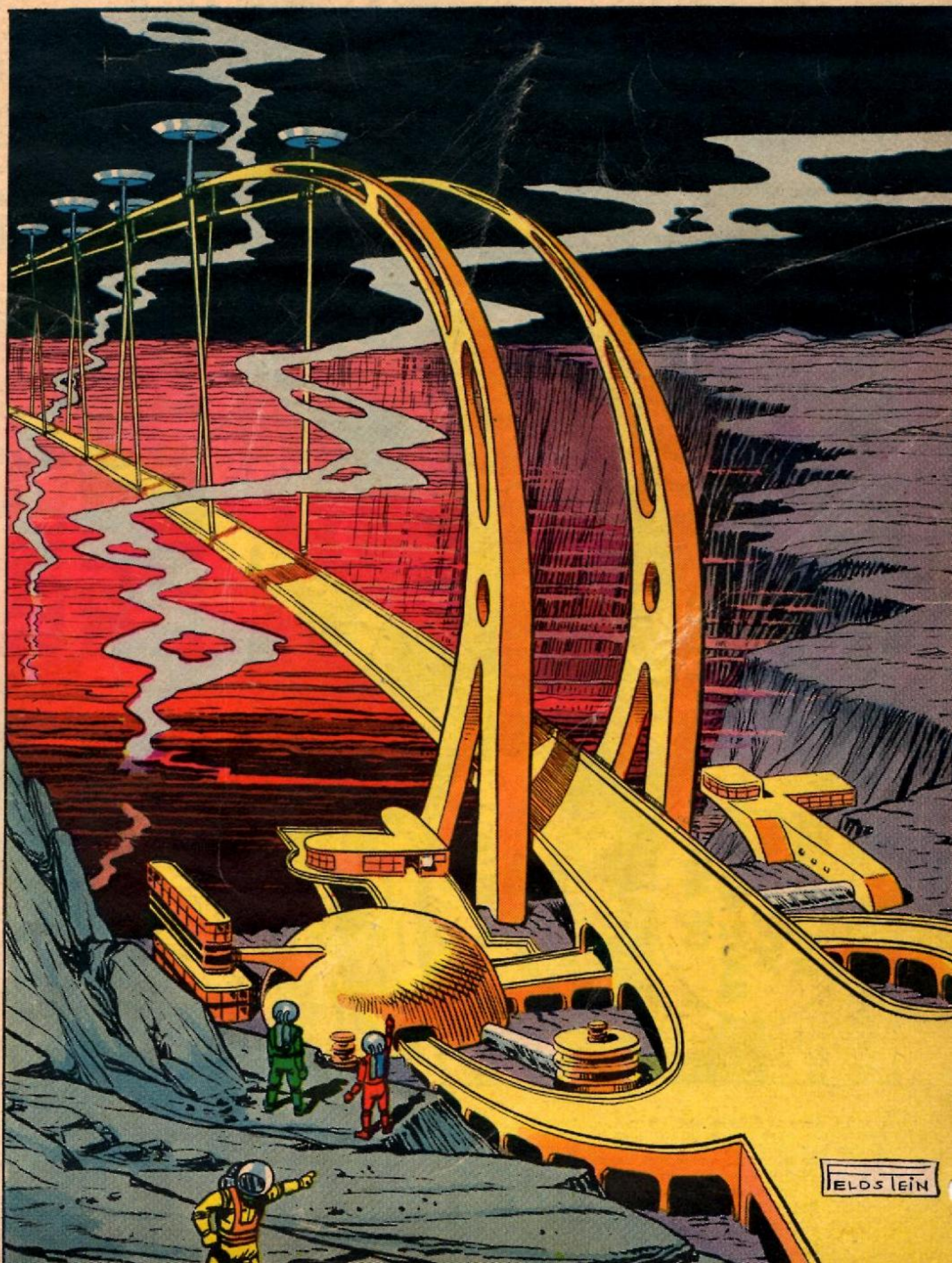
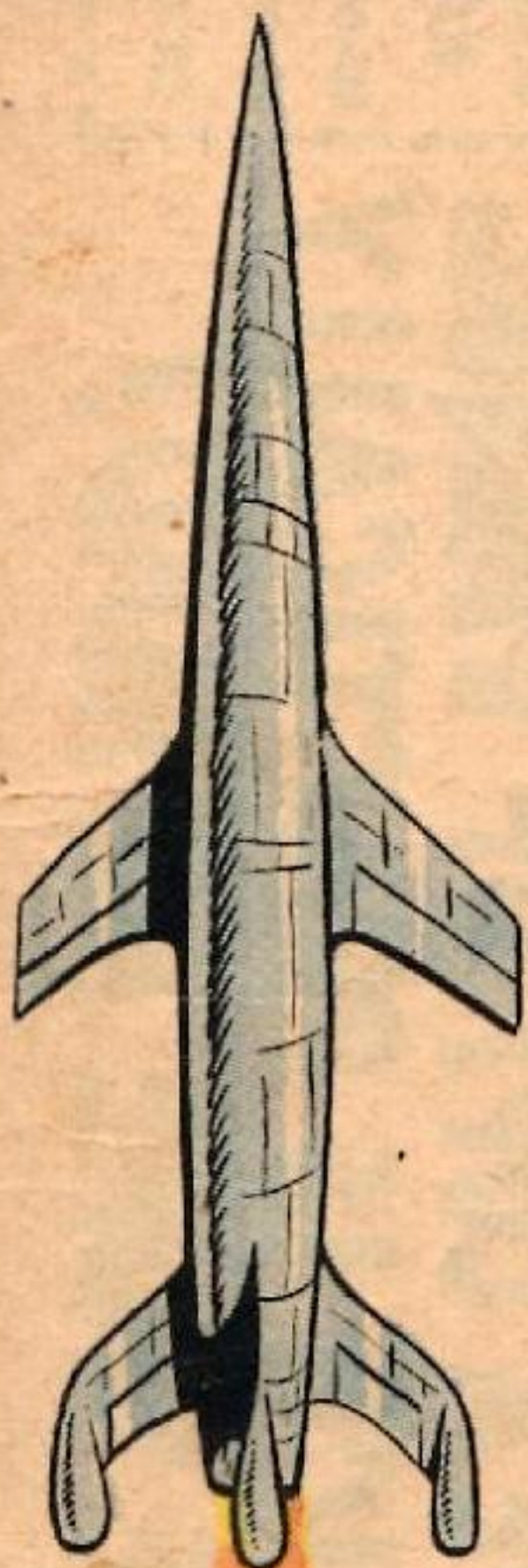


WEIRD



10¢

SCIENCE-FANTASY



ELDS LEIN



**IT'S TRUE I BOUGHT THE
LAST MAD ON THE NEWS-
STAND, BUT THEY STILL
HAVE A COPY OF PANIC
WHICH IS PRACTICALLY
THE SAME AS MAD!**



HOWEVER, IF PANIC ISN'T AVAILABLE
EITHER, WHY DON'T YOU SUBSCRIBE?
SEND MONEY TO US:

SUBSCRIPTION DEPT.
ROOM 706
225 LAFAYETTE ST.
NEW YORK 12, N.Y.

PLEASE SEND ME ONE OR BOTH MAGAZINES
CHECKED BELOW FOR WHICH I ENCLOSE
\$1.00 PER TITLE (FOR 8 ISSUES PER TITLE).

PANIC ☐ MAD ☐

NAME _____

ADDRESS _____

CITY _____

ZONE _____

STATE _____

(PLEASE PRINT)

ROUND TRIP

YOUR NAME IS HENRY WILKENS. YOU OPEN YOUR RHEUMY EYES. OVERHEAD, THE DIAMOND LIGHTS OF THE HEAVENS ARE BEGINNING TO WINK ON. YOU'VE FALLEN ASLEEP ON THE JOB AGAIN. AND NOW YOU'VE GOT TO HURRY TO MAKE UP THE HOUR YOU'VE LOST. THE NIGHTS ARE COLD THIS TIME OF YEAR AND YOUR BLOOD RUNS THIN IN YOUR VEINS. BUT EVEN SO, YOUR TIRED HEART BEATS A LITTLE FASTER AND YOU GET THAT WARMISH FEELING WHEN YOU TURN AT THE DISTANT ROAR TO LOOK UP AT THE ROCKET. *DREAMS DIE HARD, DON'T THEY, HENRY? AND YOU'VE HAD SO MANY DREAMS...*



HOW BEAUTIFUL THE GLEAMING SHIP HURTLING UPWARD IS! SLIM AND SLEEK, LIKE A YOUNG GIRL RUSHING TO MEET HER FAR-AWAY LOVER. AND THE SHIP'S FAR-AWAY LOVER IS A STAR...AND SPACE IS THEIR ROMANTIC RENDEZVOUS...



THE SHIP DISAPPEARS IN A FADING RED LINE AMONG THE WINKING DIAMOND LIGHTS WHERE A WHOLE UNIVERSE WHISPERS AND BECKONS. BUT IT DOESN'T BECKON TO YOU ANYMORE, DOES IT, HENRY? IT STOPPED...A LONG TIME AGO! YOU SIGH AND ENTER THE DINER AND DUMP THE SPUDS INTO A BIN. THEN YOU MOVE TO A ZINC-LINED SINK STACKED WITH GREASE-STAINED DISHES...



YOU SHRUG AND TURN ON THE HOT WATER. IT POURS INTO THE DISH-PILED SINK, STEAMING UP. YOU'RE **SIXTY-THREE** NOW, HENRY WILKENS! SIXTY-THREE... AND YOU'VE NEVER GOTTEN **ANYWHERE!** THE UNIVERSE BECKONED AND YOU NEVER **ANSWERED!** WHY? **WHY?** THE MEMORIES CAME CROWDING IN ON YOU. THE IMAGES DANCE AND SHIMMER IN THE STEAM. THE FACE... YOU... AS A BOY... LISTENING TO THE BECKONING STARS...

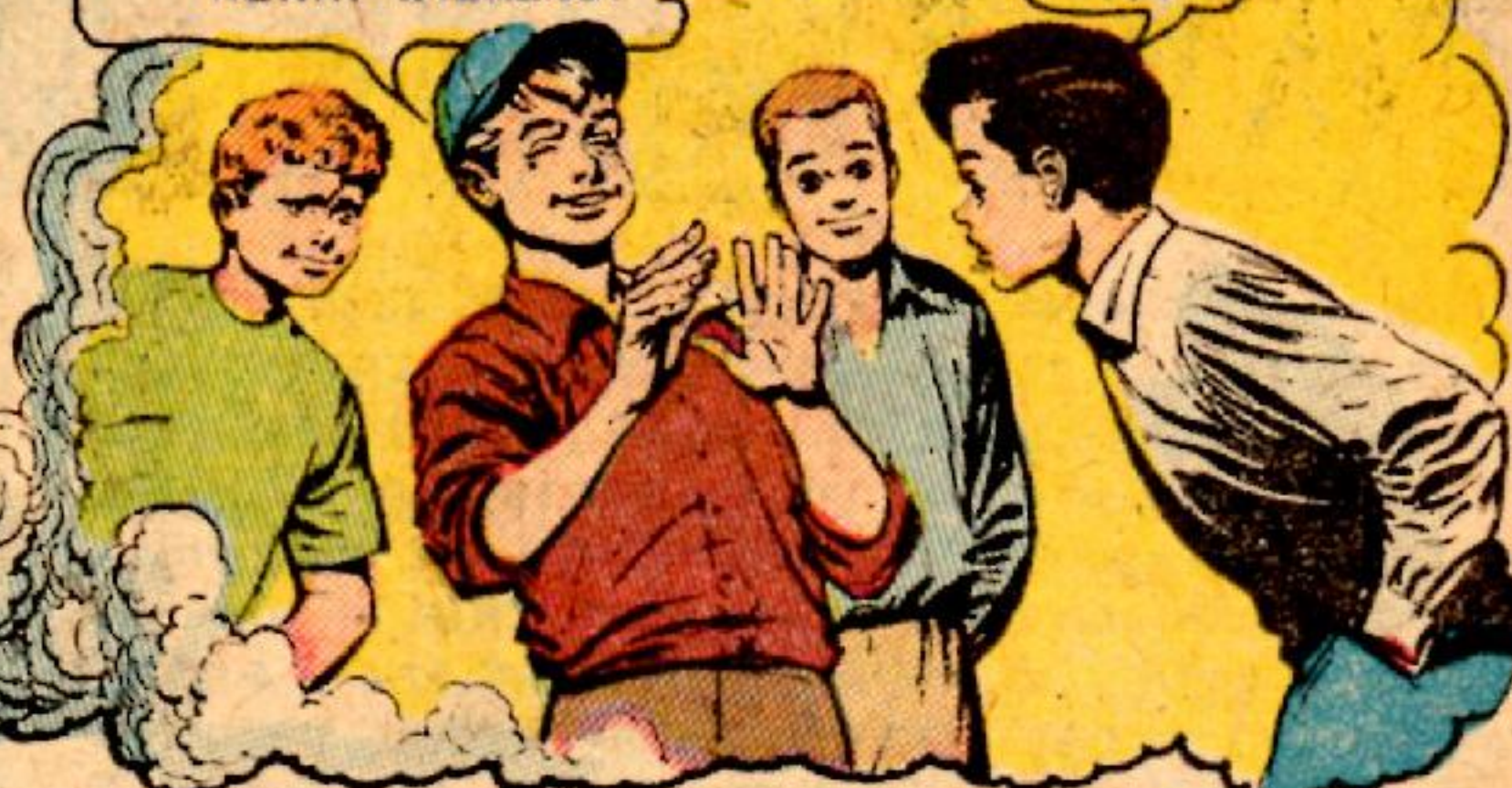


VENUS!? POO! WHEN I GROW UP, I'M GONNA VOLUNTEER TO GO TO **ALPHA CENTAURI!** THAT'S **REAL FAR!**

YOU SEE THE OTHER BOYS NOW, HENRY... YOUR CHILDHOOD FRIENDS... DREAMING ABOUT FAR-AWAY WORLDS IN SPACE...

ALPHA CEN... CEN... I BET YOU DON'T EVEN KNOW WHAT THAT PLACE IS, HENRY WILKENS!

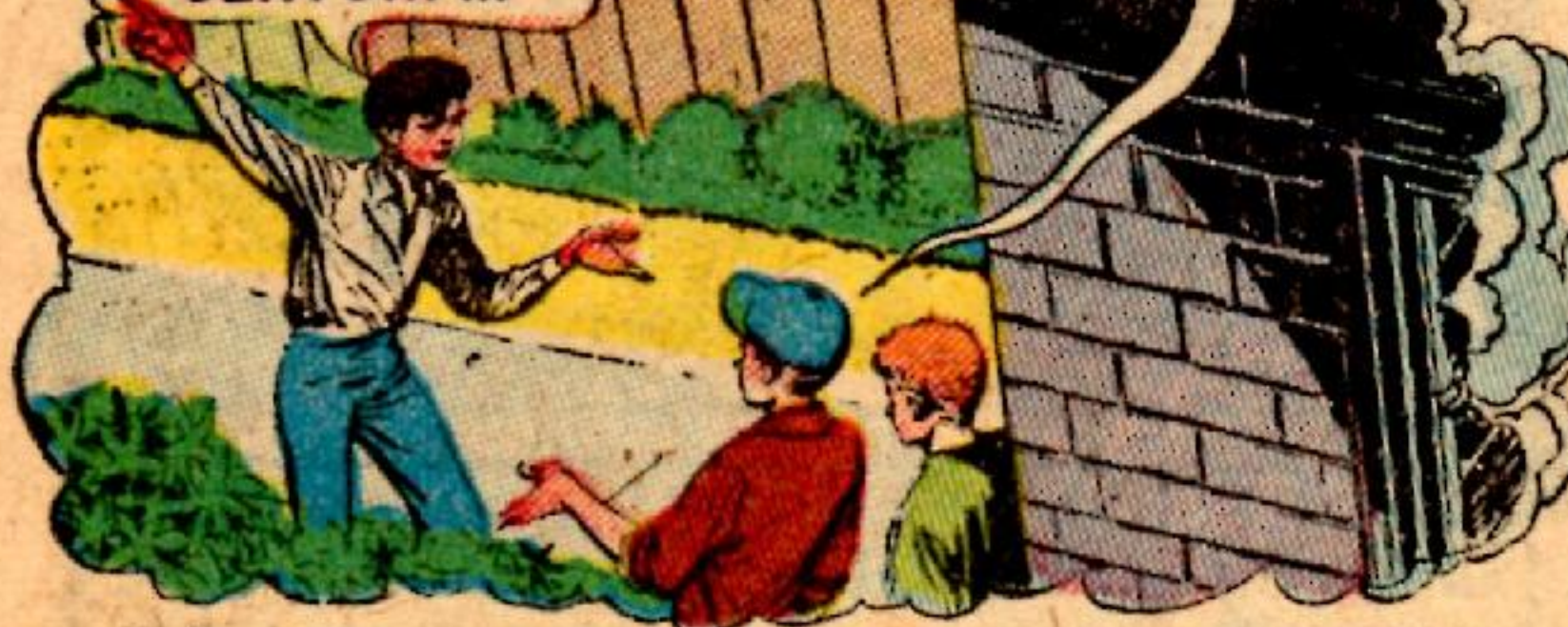
I **DO TO!** IT'S A **STAR!** THE **NEAREST STAR!** I **READ ABOUT IT!**



YES, YOU READ WHEN YOU WERE A BOY, HENRY... READ ALL ABOUT THE STUFF THAT DREAMS WERE MADE OF. FOR THAT'S WHEN YOU FIRST STARTED TO DREAM, WASN'T IT, HENRY... WHEN YOU WERE A BOY...?

IT SAID IN THE **PAPERS** THAT NOW THAT WE HAVE **SPACE TRAVEL**, WE'LL **COLONIZE** ALL THE **PLANETS** AND THEN GO ON TO **ALPHA CENTURI...**

AW, **WHY** WOULD THEY TAKE **YOU?** COLONISTS GOTTA BE **SPECIAL!** MY FATHER SAYS THEY GOTTA BE ABLE TO **DO THINGS!**



REMEMBER WHAT YOU SAID, HENRY? REMEMBER THE DETERMINATION IN YOUR VOICE. LOOK AT THE FACE IN THE STEAM, HENRY... YOUR FACE... AS A BOY! LISTEN TO THE WORDS...

I'LL DO THINGS! YOU JUST WAIT AND SEE! I'LL BE **SPECIAL!**



WHAT **HAPPENED**, HENRY? WHAT **HAPPENED** TO THE **DREAM?** THE **OTHERS** WENT ON TO **THEIR DREAMS!** PHIL WAS CAPTAIN OF A SPACE FREIGHTER! DAVE HAD BEEN LOST ON THE THIRD EXPEDITION TO PLUTO. WHAT **HAPPENED** TO **YOUR DREAM**, HENRY...?

HENRY, **PLEASE!** DON'T ... **TALK** ABOUT THOSE THINGS! WHEN YOU TALK LIKE **THAT...** ABOUT **SPACE...** IT GIVES ME **GOOSE BUMPS**. YOU... YOU DON'T **LOVE** ME, **THAT'S** THE **TROUBLE!**

BUT I **DO**, **ELLIE!** I **DO!**



WAS IT **ELLIE**, HENRY? DID **SHE** **SIDETRACK** YOUR **DREAM?**...

NO, YOU DON'T! IF YOU **LOVED** ME, YOU'D WANT TO **MARRY** ME! YOU'D FIND A **JOB...** **RIGHT HERE!** I WON'T WAIT **FOREVER!** I **WON'T!**

ALL RIGHT, **ELLIE**, IF THAT'S WHAT YOU **WANT!** I SUPPOSE I **COULD** GO TO **SCHOOL NIGHTS** AND **WORK DAYS!**



BUT **SOMEDAY**, **ELLIE...** OF **COURSE!** **SOMEDAY** I'VE **GOT** TO GO! IT'S LIKE A **FIRE** BURNING INSIDE ME... AS IF SOMETHING UP THERE KEEPS **TUGGING** AT ME! **DON'T** YOU?

I... I **UNDERSTAND!** BUT FIRST... YOU **WILL** GET THAT **JOB**, WON'T YOU?



SO YOU'D GOTTEN THAT JOB... AND THE DREAM HAD WAITED...

HEY, YOU! SNAP OUT OF IT! WE NEED THOSE DISHES TODAY... NOT NEXT WEEK!



YOU'D DONE YOUR BEST, BUT AFTER A WHILE, THE STEAM SEEMED TO HAVE SAPPED SOMETHING OUT OF YOU. YOU'D QUIT SCHOOL. THAT WAS ELLIE'S DOING...

STARS! PLANETS! WHAT DO I CARE ABOUT THE STARS? I'M SICK OF LISTENING TO YOU WHINE!



OTHER MEN BUY THEIR WIVES NICE THINGS! BUT NOT YOU! OH, NO! ALL YOU CAN DO IS HOPE... YOU... YOU DISHWASHER! IF YOU WERE HALF A MAN, YOU'D FIND A WAY TO GET US OUT OF THIS RAT-TRAP!

ELLIE... I...

ELLIE! ELLIE! DON'T ELLIE ME! YOU'RE A JELLYFISH! THERE MUST BE SOMETHING YOU CAN DO BESIDE WASH DISHES! AT LEAST YOU CAN TRY...

ALL RIGHT, ELLIE! WE'LL ... WE'LL HEAD WEST. MAYBE THINGS WILL BREAK BETTER THERE!

"ALL RIGHT, ELLIE!" THE WORDS HAD BECOME AUTOMATIC, EVENTUALLY... A CONDITIONED REFLEX. YOU'D SAID THEM IN A DOZEN CITIES AFTER THAT. BUT THINGS HADN'T EVER BROKEN BETTER...



THE LONG YEARS HAD MADE DUST OF YOUR DREAMS. YOU'D BEEN IN A HUNDRED TOWNS AND YET YOU'D NEVER BEEN ANYWHERE, REALLY! YOU'D EVEN STOPPED TRYING, IN THE END, AFTER...

SORRY! I'M AFRAID YOU WON'T DO!

BUT YOUR AD SAID YOU NEEDED LABORERS FOR ONE OF THE COLONIES! I'LL GO ANYWHERE... DO ANYTHING!

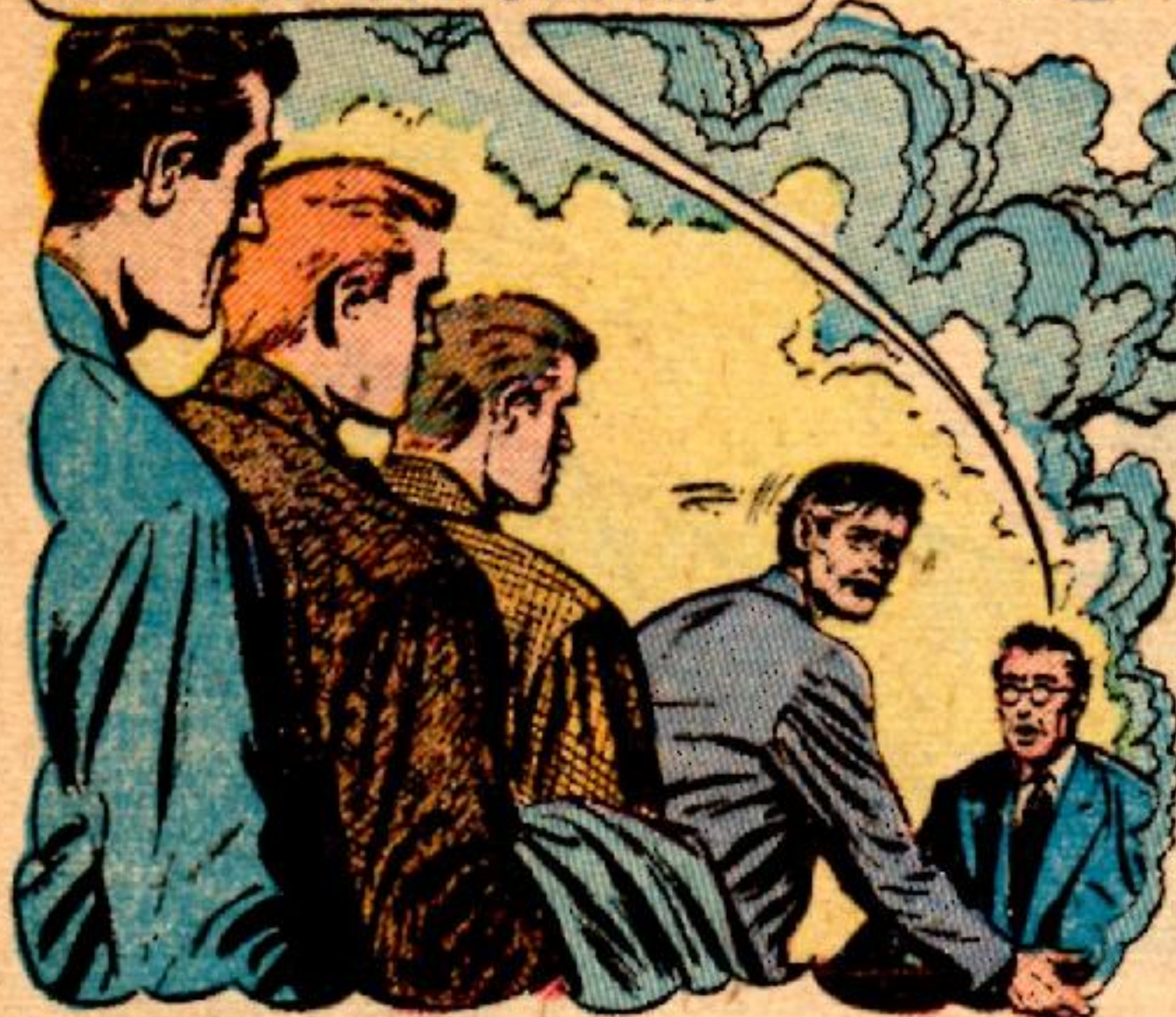


THE AD SAID "MEN IN PERFECT PHYSICAL CONDITION." THINGS ARE STILL A BIT RUGGED ON PLUTO, DAD! THESE JOBS ARE FOR YOUNG MEN!

I KNOW! BUT I'M NOT SO OLD! I'LL WORK HARDER THAN ANYONE! PLEASE! THIS IS MY LAST CHANCE! YOU DON'T UNDERSTAND!



I... DO UNDERSTAND, OLD TIMER. I'VE SEEN SPACE FEVER BEFORE! BUT TAKE A LOOK BEHIND YOU. IF YOU WERE ME, WHO WOULD YOU SIGN ON?



REMEMBER, HENRY? REMEMBER HIS *PITYING EYES*? REMEMBER HOW *HOPE DIED* IN YOU THAT DAY? NOTHING WAS LEFT! NOTHING EXCEPT AN *OLD MAN'S DREAM*...



HEY! HEY, HENRY! C'MON, POP! SNAP OUT OF IT! STOP STARIN' OUT OF THE WINDOW AN' GET THEM *DISHES* DONE!

IT'S THE *BOSS*, HENRY... THE *BOSS* OF *THIS DINER*... THIS *HUNDRETH DINER*... NO, THIS *THOUSANDTH DINER*! YOU'VE *LOST COUNT*, HAVEN'T YOU, HENRY? IT'S ALMOST LIKE COUNTING THE *STARS*, NOW...

I'M LEAVING POP! WHEN YOU'RE FINISHED, LOCK UP, HUH?

SURE, BOSS! SURE!



YOU'D *CLUNG* TO YOUR DREAM, HADN'T YOU, HENRY... YOUR OLD MAN'S DREAM? AND YOU'D COME *HERE* THINKING IT WOULD BE *DIFFERENT*... THINKING THAT *HERE* WOULD BE AN *OPPORTUNITY* TO FIND YOUR DREAM! BUT IT WAS JUST LIKE IN ALL THE *OTHER PLACES*, WASN'T IT? JUST ANOTHER *HAMBURGER JOINT*...



THE *STARS*, HENRY... THE *STARS* BECKON. YOU WIPE YOUR HANDS... PALE AND WRINKLED FROM GROPING IN OCEANS OF SOAPY WATER. YOU GLANCE AT THE THERMOMETER OUTSIDE...

HMMM! PRETTY COLD!



YOU SHRUG INTO YOUR SLEAZY OVERCOAT, WRAP A HEAVY SCARF AROUND YOUR SCRAWNY THROAT, KILL THE LIGHTS, AND STEP OUT INTO THE BITING WIND THAT SWEEPS ACROSS THE BLEAK EMPTY DESERT AND HOWLS DOWN THE WIDE HIGHWAY THAT STRETCHES AWAY TOWARD THE FAR-AWAY PURPLE MOUNTAINS...



THE WIND POKES ICY FINGERS INTO YOUR TIRED OLD EYES, AND THE TEARS COME... SLOWLY, AT FIRST... FROM THE COLD... BUT FASTER, THEN... AS YOU HEAR THE DISTANT THUNDER...



THE DISTANT THUNDER, RIDING ON THE WIND, CRYING TO ALL THE UNIVERSE, WARNING THE STARS THAT ANOTHER GLEAMING NEEDLE WILL SOON BE SEWING ITS RED-TAILED COURSE AMONG THEM. AND THEN YOU SEE IT... LEAPING UP... LEAVING THE ROCKET-PORT ON THE DESERT HORIZON...



... AND THE SADNESS INSIDE YOU IS TOO BIG TO HOLD. IT GRIPS YOU AS THE THUNDER SWELLS. THE TEARS THAT FLOW ARE *NOT* FROM THE *ICY WIND NOW!*



THE THUNDER FADES. THE SHIP IS LOST IN THE NIGHT... LIKE A DREAM ... LIKE A THOUSAND DREAMS. THE SILENCE CLOSES IN. THE AWAKENING. *ELLIE WILL BE WAITING!*



NO, HENRY, YOU'LL *NEVER* FIND YOUR DREAM. IT'S ALMOST *ENDED* NOW. REALITY IS A *HARSH* AND *BITTER THING*. IT *BITES* YOU... LIKE THE *STINGING WIND*... YOU PLOD DOWN THE HIGHWAY OF REALITY TO YOUR RAMSHACKLE HOUSE, AND YOU UNLOCK THE DOOR...



SO! YOU *FINALLY* GOT HOME! IT'S ABOUT TIME!

YOU STAND IN THE DOORWAY, STARING AT ELLIE... FAT, SLOPPY, GREY, OLD... LIKE THAT FADED OLD DREAM...



WELL, *DON'T* JUST *STAND* THERE! *SHUT THE DOOR!* DO YOU WANT ME TO *FREEZE?*

IT'S THE *SAME*... *ALWAYS THE SAME*... WHEREVER YOU'VE *BEEN!* A THOUSAND *CITIES*... A THOUSAND STEAMING, GREASY *SINKS!* AND *HERE*... EVEN *HERE*, IT'S THE *SAME!* IT WILL *ALWAYS* BE THE *SAME, WHEREVER* YOU GO, HENRY!



C'MON T' BED, HENRY! IT'S *LATE!*

ALL RIGHT, ELLIE!

YES, THE DREAM *IS ENDED*, HENRY. YOU SHUT THE DOOR. YOU DON'T LOOK UP. WHY *SHOULD* YOU LOOK UP?



YOU'VE *SEEN DEIMOS* AND *PHOBOS* SO MANY TIMES *BEFORE!* YOU PAY NO *ATTENTION* TO THE *TWO MOONS* OVERHEAD! A MAN *DOESN'T*... AFTER THE *FIRST* FEW MONTHS... AFTER THE *NOVELTY* OF *BEING ON MARS* HAS WORN OFF!

- THE END -